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SUBJECT: NEPAL RELEASES TIBETAN PROTESTERS

REF: KATHMANDU 00564

Tibetan Detainees Released

¶1. (SBU) On June 28, following interventions by Tibetan community leaders and the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Government of Nepal's Immigration Department released the 34 Tibetan protesters detained on June 26 (reftel). The Immigration authorities initially asked the protesters to sign statements affirming that they would not protest again but when the protesters refused, they were released unconditionally.

¶2. (SBU) Joint Secretary Ghimere of the National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA) called UNHCR Representative Daisy Dell late on Sunday afternoon, June 28, to request an immediate meeting to discuss the status of the 34 Tibetans detained first by the Nepali police and subsequently by NUCRA from June 26. Dell had initially told Refcoord that she did not expect to discuss the issue with NUCRA until Monday, June 29, and later reported to Refcoord that she was surprised but pleased to receive the call. Dell reported that she was at first concerned that the refugees, including at least two known "troublemakers" from the group of 90 turned over to UNHCR in September 2008, would be given back to UNHCR's custody, just as they were following two previous attempts to go to the Nepal-Tibet border. Following the discussion with Joint Secretary Ghimere, however, NUCRA agreed to UNHCR's request to release the refugees on their own recognizance. This serves to relieve UNHCR of responsibility for the refugees' future behavior and puts some welcome distance between this group and the UNHCR overseen/USG-funded Transit Center for new Tibetan arrivals.

Ambassador Raises Tibetan Detainees with FonMin

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Powell met with Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala on June 29 and expressed U.S. interest in the status of the protesting Tibetans. Koirala responded by saying that she understood U.S. interest but that Nepal had received messages (unnamed but doubtless the Chinese) asking the Nepalis to be careful in their handling of this issue. Koirala added that the Tibetan issue could also affect Nepal's own security.

Comment

¶4. (SBU) Although temporarily resolved, this issue will almost certainly recur because at least some of the 34 Tibetans appear determined to take actions that will generate

publicity calling attention to the plight of the Tibetan
refugees.
POWELL